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State Representative Jerry Torr
Room 401, Statehouse
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Indianapolis, IN 46204



IS THE STATE HOLDING UNCLAIMED PROPERTY THAT BELONGS TO YOU?

Attorney General Steve Carter's office wants you to know it's possible some residents in my district have unclaimed property that could be of value to them. Under a law passed by the Indiana General Assembly and revised in 1995, personal property and money that has gone unclaimed for some time is turned over to the Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Division. Unclaimed property is returned to the State after it has been left with a "holder" (such as a bank, insurance company, or other business or organization) and there has been no owner-generated activity in the account for a set period of time.

The Attorney General's Office holds the property for 25 years while attempting to locate the rightful owner or their heirs. During this time individuals who are legally entitled may file a claim for the property with the Unclaimed Property Division.

Some types of unclaimed property are bonds, savings and checking accounts, credit balances, insurance proceeds, safe deposit box contents, deposits or overpayments, stocks/dividends, utility deposits, estate proceeds, and uncashed traveler's checks and money orders. It does not consist of real estate, furniture, etc.

It's easy and free to find out if you have property owed to you:

1. Check legal notices in your local paper that are posted periodically
2. Log on to www.indianaunclaimed.com and follow the instructions
3. Call the Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Division at 1-866-462-5246



A Message from State Representative

Jerry Torr

This past legislative session required action and decisions on many crucial issues. One of the most important issues was to formulate Indiana's budget for the next two years. A budget that provides funding for critical government services including education, public safety, and Medicaid.

Another imperative task was devising and implementing an economic development strategy to restart Indiana's struggling economy. House Republicans were able to steer the debate this session toward economic development, which will bring Indiana's economy into the twenty-first century.

Many of you took the time to fill out my legislative survey at the start of the year, and I am grateful you provided me with feedback on your opinions. I have had the unique opportunity to meet and hear the concerns of many people in our district. Of course, I always appreciate input from constituents on issues and legislation that affect our area.

If you are interested in receiving information about issues in state government affecting our community, I would encourage you to email me at h39@in.gov and request to be added to my email update.

Now that the first session of the 113th Indiana General Assembly has concluded, it is my privilege to update you on changes to state law that may affect you. This post-session newsletter provides details on the major issues of session including the state's biennial budget and our economic development initiatives. You will also find news relating more specifically to our district and contact information so that you may keep me informed of any questions or concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever necessary.

Sincerely,

Jerry Torr



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Visit my website
for more information at:

www.in.gov/H39

For more information regarding the 2003 General Assembly, visit **www.in.gov/legislative**

Right Track Indiana

Biennial Budget

Education Funding

Daylight Saving Time

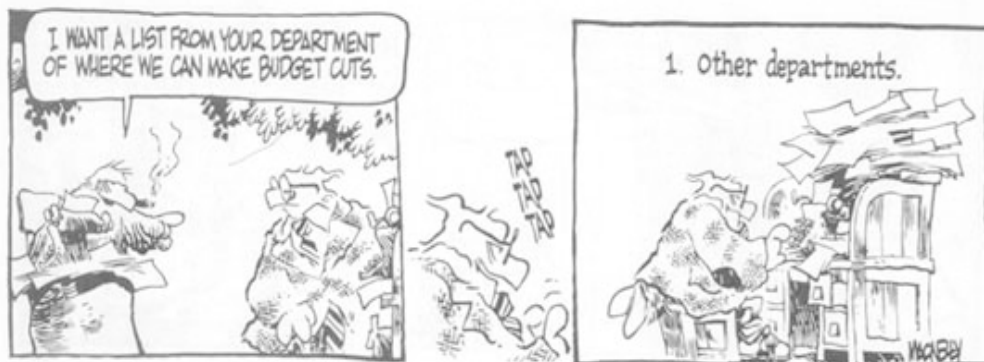
Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of this session was the passage of many of the major initiatives first proposed by House Republicans in our “Right Track Indiana” economic development plan. Coupled with the business tax restructuring that was done during last summer’s special session, I believe that these proposals will go a long way toward energizing Indiana’s lagging economy and putting unemployed Hoosiers back to work.

As a part of the plan, Indiana’s economic development efforts will be completely streamlined and redesigned through the creation of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). We’ve also established a Government Efficiency Commission – a blue ribbon panel that will volunteer their time to root out waste, inefficiency and overspending at all levels of state government.

Additionally, we’ve made major investments in job creation including record funding for the 21st Century Research and Technology Fund, Technology Parks and tax incentives to attract and retain high-wage employers to Indiana. We’ve also made strategic investments to improve technology infrastructure and to assist in rural economic development. These initiatives will not only help reduce unemployment and increase state tax revenues, they should also help create high-tech jobs that will encourage more of our college graduates to work, live and raise their families right here at home in Indiana.

Over the last couple of years, I believe we’ve made significant strides in improving our marketability to employers – both existing Indiana businesses and outside businesses that are considering expanding or relocating. We can do better, and I’ll continue working to give Indiana the best business climate in the Midwest.

For more details on our Right Track Indiana Agenda, please visit the House Republican website at http://www.in.gov/legislative/house_republicans/.



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If there was a bright spot in the 2003 legislative session, it was that we passed a biennial budget bill on time – in fact three days ahead of the statutory deadline. Over the past two decades, it seems that special sessions have become the norm rather than the exception, and I was pleased that we were able to work in a somewhat bipartisan fashion to get our work done on time.

For my part, however, I felt that I had no alternative but to vote “no” on the final budget bill for a number of reasons. First of all, as I’ve detailed elsewhere in this newsletter, the school funding formula does not provide for a proportional share of state tuition support for school corporations in growing areas such as ours, and will provide less funding per student than the schools are receiving today.

And then there’s the fact that the state budget spends nearly \$1.2 billion more than projected revenue over the next two years. When your family or small business budget gets tight due to unanticipated expenses or lower than expected income, you have to “tighten your belt” and live within your means. State government should be no different. Yet the General Assembly has failed to make meaningful budget cuts and prioritize state spending in order to balance our budget.

While we failed to cut spending to balance the budget, we also reneged on our promise to reduce property taxes this year. Earlier this year, the administration discovered that the state had been incorrectly applying the Homestead Credit for years, and that correcting the error would virtually negate the property tax cuts that were passed during last summer’s special session. In order to make good on the promises that we made last summer, further tax cuts would have to be enacted to offset the increase that will result automatically from correcting the Homestead Credit error.

This error provided a convenient “out” for legislators who didn’t have the will to cut spending, but also didn’t want to vote for a tax increase. Meanwhile, taxpayers ended up with the short straw once again.

Although there were some positive aspects to the budget bill as well, I simply could not support a budget that outspends state revenue while denying homeowners the previously promised property tax cuts.

When your family or small business budget gets tight due to unanticipated expenses or lower than expected income, you have to “tighten your belt” and live within your means. State government should be no different.

One of the biggest battles waged this session – and perhaps one of the most important – was over the school funding formula that determines how nearly \$7.4 billion of state tuition support will be divided among Indiana’s 293 public school corporations for the next two years.

The funding formula passed out of the House as a part of the budget bill in February included a 3 percent cap in total funding growth. Had the cap become law, it would have been devastating to growing school districts such as Carmel, Hamilton Southeastern and Westfield.

Although a number of legislators worked hard to get a compromise that will treat our local school districts much better than the original House Democrat proposal, rapidly growing school districts may still find that their per student funding will be much less over the next couple of years. In Hamilton Southeastern, for example, per student spending will drop from 135th out of 293 school corporations in the state to 255th in per student funding.

For decades, the legislature has been protecting the mostly urban and rural declining enrollment schools to the detriment of the growing enrollment suburban districts such as ours. Indianapolis Public Schools, for instance, has gone from over 100,000 students in its heyday to around 40,000 students today, yet IPS has never gone a year without an increase in its overall state tuition support! Under pressure from teacher unions, the legislature has been reluctant to reduce funding for school corporations that have declining enrollment, no matter how much the enrollment declines.

There’s one thing most of us would agree on, however; whatever amount the state spends on public education, our local school districts should receive their proportionate share of that funding.

I heard from believe that the “dollars should follow the students” and that growing enrollment schools should receive more funding while schools with declining enrollment should receive less.

Some think we spend too much on public education already, and still others think we can’t spend enough. There’s one thing most of us would agree on, however; whatever amount the state spends on public education, our local school districts should receive their proportionate share of that funding. With a finite amount of funding available for public schools, it seems only fair that the funding would be divided ostensibly evenly among the million or so public school students in Indiana. Most constituents that I

Once again, the Indiana General Assembly stuck its collective head in the sand and failed to enact Daylight Saving Time. I continue to be amazed at some of the arguments against observing DST, but the opposition seems to come mainly from those who simply don’t want to be inconvenienced with changing their digital clocks and VCR’s twice a year.

Ironically, DST proposals have been killed the last few years by legislators from Northwest Indiana where they observe Central Daylight Saving Time; apparently they want to enjoy the benefits of DST while depriving the rest of the state from it.

I realize that some of you are perfectly content with the time we’re on year round, and wish I’d just leave your clocks alone. In fact, most legislators want to stay away from such divisive issues because they’re less likely to get into political trouble by doing nothing. I understand the sentiment, and if I had my way we’d make the rest of the country leave their clocks the same all year like we do. But the fact is that we don’t have that power, and failing to change our clocks with the rest of the world makes it more difficult for businesses outside of Indiana to do business with us.

I don’t think it’s possible to quantify the economic development impact of enacting Daylight Saving Time in Indiana, but I have no doubt that it would have a positive effect. This is the one thing we could do for economic development that wouldn’t cost Hoosier taxpayers a dime. It’s past time to pass Daylight Saving Time in Indiana.



Rep. Torr confers with fellow caucus members before the legislature convenes for business.